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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

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25 November 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM : National Intelligence Officer for Latin America

SUBJECT : Monthly Warning Assessment: Latin America

1. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras -- Overview

There is consensus that [REDACTED] a sharp increase in guerrilla violence in the next months led by an expected offensive in El Salvador to begin around mid-December and followed by efforts to directly attack US embassies or personnel in Guatemala and Honduras along with other types of additional terrorist violence there. 25X1

The essential political purposes, both in the region and among foreign observers, are to demonstrate: the momentum and strength of the guerrillas and the high and likely increased costs of containing or defeating them. Most probably, international supporters of the extreme left will argue for unconditional negotiations and broader international recognition in view of the inability of the three governments to reduce the guerrilla threats despite additional US help in 1981. [REDACTED] 25X1

2. Nicaragua

Among a total Cuban presence of about 5,700, there are about 1,800 military and security personnel. Their functions include training the new secret police, helping the expanding army, counterinsurgency, and protection of Sandinista leaders. The intelligence community detected the surreptitious deployment of about 225 Ministry of Interior special troops on civil aircraft along with teachers and other passengers in late September to mid-October.

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Although there is no firm information to indicate whether additional Cuban troops or security personnel have been sent to Nicaragua, this issue should be closely monitored.

Preparations for the receipt of jet fighters continue and include construction work on four airfields and pilot training. In September 1981, Soviet-supplied MIG-21s were sent to Cuba as possible new replacements for older planes Castro might send to Nicaragua. The MIG-21 crates were moved to another airfield and then disappeared [] While all analysts expect jet fighters to be sent to Nicaragua, the timing is uncertain. 25X1

Nicaragua continues its support for the guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala. Nicaraguan security personnel have begun a more visible and disruptive campaign of harassment against US Embassy personnel, including their civilian dependents. One report suggested that this campaign showed signs of assistance from more experienced secret police, for example, the Cubans. 25X1

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Nicaragua also continues other subversive activities in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Belize, while an unconfirmed report indicates that 40 or more nationals of the Dominican Republic are also being given terrorist and guerrilla training. [] 25X1

3. El Salvador

Civil-military strains and mutual distrust remain a fact of life for the government and at any time could threaten its unity. Nonetheless, analysts believe that such strains are at a low ebb, and the junta may indeed be somewhat stronger than before.

Analysts generally believe that the leftist guerrillas plan to launch a coordinated, though limited, offensive in the next 4-6 weeks. It would be designed to:

- disrupt the crucial electoral process;
- demonstrate guerrilla unity, power;
- further sabotage the economy;
- secure further recognition from outside, notably Mexico, Social Democrats.

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The offensive, if it comes, could be pivotal. Analysts generally believe the security forces will contain the offensive. They worry, however, that the military will prevail by only a narrow margin and that military morale, logistics, and leadership will be seriously weakened. This would set the stage for the guerrillas to regain the momentum in the critical months leading to the March 1982 elections. It would also "vindicate" and encourage outside backers of subversion and could, in turn, tempt some international "fence sitters" to offer support and/or recognition. Several analysts note that the guerrillas are increasingly well-armed, trained, and sophisticated in technique, while the military has made comparatively slower progress in remedying logistical, manpower, communication, and other deficiencies. [REDACTED]

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4. Honduras

Analysts believe the crucial electoral process--which would legitimize and strengthen the government--is still on track, though potentially threatened by last-minute military qualms. Irrespective of the elections, however, Honduras faces a growing challenge from domestic extreme leftists and their external backers.

Efforts to unify the various extreme left groups continue to make progress. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The number of armed guerrillas in-country has increased from about 100 in 1980 to about 800, with reports of about 90 more training in Cuba and unconfirmed estimates of several hundred Honduran guerrillas positioned in Nicaragua for deployment in January 1982. At the same time, clashes between rural peasants and landowners, as well as some heavy-handed tactics by security forces are giving the armed left propaganda opportunities.

For now, most analysts believe Havana and Managua prefer to avoid an all-out campaign in Honduras (instead preserving that country as an arms corridor to El Salvador) while preparing for full-scale armed insurrection after victory in El Salvador. Some Honduran extremists, however, clearly seek to jump the gun by undertaking major violence now. Moreover, it is entirely possible Havana will, in the near future, encourage more than just a limited increase in violence to hinder the elections or nullify their positive impact. Cuba and Nicaragua want to render Honduras unable to work against revolutionary activity in Guatemala and El Salvador or provide sanctuary for anti-Sandinista groups. [REDACTED]

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